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COLLECTED ESSAYS

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ESSAYS PAPERS &c.
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ROBERT BRIDGES

II
HUMDRUM & HARUM SCARUM
A LECTURE ON FREE VERSE

III
POETIC DICTION

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TABLE OF THE NEW SYMBOLS USED

IN the first essay (see Preface thereto)

- (1) $\dot{\text{z}}$ for the diphthongal sound in *eye* and *right*.
- (2) 'soft' and 'hard' G were distinguished.
- (3) ñ for the modified *n* in *-ing*.

In the following essays, II and III, the sounds represented in ordinary spelling by A are differentiated thus:

- (4) *a* = the *a* of *father* (this is the true Romance A) .
- (5) *a* = the *a* of *hat*
- (6) *a* or æ = the *a* of *slave*. This symbol is made by a ligature of the two vowels which compose the sound; viz. the *e* of *bed* and the *i* of *in*, as they appear in the words *rein* and *they*: such correctly spelt words are of course left unchanged. The modification of this sound before *r*, as in *various*, will be a rule of pronunciation, as also the effect of *qu* and *w* on the following vowel.
- (7) $\&$ = the *a* in *almighty*.
- (8) *av* = the same sound which occurs as *au* or *aw* in *autumn* and *awl*.

Note: The reader is reminded that inconsistencies must occur in avoiding the confusion which would arise from using the symbols in words which require other new symbols to complete them. Such words are left in their old dress until they can be completely provided. Also note that the final *e* which is always mute, except in a few foreign words, is omitted where its presence would wrongly imply the lengthening of the preceding vowel, as in *liv*, *hav*, *colleg*. This simple advantage cannot be made use of in words where the preceding vowel is mis-spelt, as in *dove*.

Capitals are not dealt with and illustrative quotations are given in the original spelling.

Any oversights in the text will not affect the purpose of the experiment.

II

HUMDRUM AND HARUM-SCARUM

A LECTURE ON FREE VERSE

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II

HUMDRUM AND HARUM-SCARUM

A LECTURE ON FREE VERSE

W H E N I was invited last term to discuss some poetical subject before a literary society in my old colleg in OX'ford, it seem'd to me that the question of Free Verse would suit the occasion; and havity well consider' d the matter for that select audience, I am now summarizing midiscourse as lucidly as I can for a wider public.

First of a/ll it is expedient to get rid of the word Poetry. I shall not discuss the difference between poetry and prose,¹ but merely the distinctiv forms of verse and prose. The term Free Verse implies that it is with form that we hav to deal, and not with content; and mi procedure will be to tri to discover the meanin of the term Free verse, and then to show some of the results that must follow from writin in the new or free manner so descib'dor imagin'd.

¹ Argument with those terms sometimes takes the followin form:

'Verse is poetical rhythm;

All imagtnativ prose is poetical;

It is a lso rhythmical;

Therefore all imaginativ prose is verse=free verse. Q. E. D.

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Tho' I wish to confine myself to English Tree verse, one cannot treat the subject at all without reference to Trench vers libre; because in France the revolt against the traditional form is in its threats and promises very similar to our own, and the theory of it has been more intelligently handled and analyzed there than by English critics, the best of whom borrow their reasoning, so far as I can find, from the Trench. I do not see that we have in England any definite or logical notion of Tree Verse distinct from the Trench, nor that, as far as theory goes, there can really be any difference.

The impulse of the movement is admitted to be a widespread conviction that the old metrical forms and prosodies are exhausted. Thus Mr. Flint, who is well acquainted with the French movement and has long been keeping us in touch with contemporary French verse, writes in his Other World Cadences one sentence of his creed,—

(That Rhyme and Metre are artificial and external additions to Poetry, and that as the various changes that can be run upon them were worked out, they grew more and more insipid until they have become contemptible and encumbent

One could not subscribe to this formula without restricting it, but its exaggerations represent, as I take it, merely an emotional quality in the writer's true conviction.

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The word free in 'free verse' means escape from some' thin), and that somethir^ is the old metrical forms and prosodies. And now havi cavtiously taken this first step on to solid ground, we shall naturally ask whether, havin discarded the old forms, we are to hav eny new forms, or > whether freedom is merely absence of all form. And since formlessness can hav no place in Art, and since eny dis' cussion on the nature office verse imples someform in it, however critics my havfiiYd to define it, we my assume that, besides the negativ quality of lackir^ &ll the distinctions of metrical verse, there must be somepositiv quality imagxndfor it bj which it will be distinguishable from prose.

And besides the determination to escape from metre, thare is a/lso another point on which aAlfree versifiers agree, namely, that free verse must be rhythmical {conveniently used for eurhythmic), nor does zny one doubt what \ is ment b rhythm. Rhythm is in fact difficult to define, but it is easily felt, tho the faculty for feelity it varies im' mensely. Here it is enough to sty that it is more than mere movement; it is rather a co-ordination of movements that appeals to the feeling or emotions; and if prose were not rhythmical we should here hav the differentiation of verse from prose. But good prose is also rhythmical, so that

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our question about rhythm must take this form, namely, whether there is any difference between the rhythms of verse and prose, and if so, what that difference is.

Now it would seem clear that the main formal difference between the rhythms of prose and metrical verse was due to the prosody; and since that, being discarded, can no longer serve for a distinction, it will follow that, if there is to be any distinction between the rhythms of prose and free verse, it must be a more subtle affair.

The main effectual difference between the rhythms of the old metrical verse and of prose is, that in the verse you have a greater expectancy of the rhythm; and that comes of the rhythms being more marked and predetermined and confined; and the poet's art was to vary the expected rhythm as much as he could without disagreeably breaking the expectation. This expectancy appears in the critical attitude of the hearer towards the more irregular verses of a poem, in prose this sort or grade of expectancy was absent and even forbidden, and however much the orator's art led you to welcome the sequence of his phrases, and however satisfied you might be when they disclosed themselves, yet they did not seem predetermined.¹ Thus if a sentence in an old

**Dr. Blass on the Greek orators, with Aristotle and Dionysius, supplies illustration of the Greek practice of hybrid forms.*

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text were deleted you could not supply the lost rhythms in a prose passage so confidently as you might in a poem, where the metre prescribed certain necessities.

It follows from this that what is verse to some hearers is prose to others; and since there is no short speech-rhythm in prose which might not be used as a metrical rhythm or a part of some metrical system, the only difference would seem to be that in prose the rhythms were not evident or repeated; if repeated you would come to expect them.

Now if we should take on the one hand some fine passages of English prose, and on the other some fine passages of our old metrical verse, and regard them as typical extremes, it is plain that between their markedly different rhythmical effects—one of which we recognize as prose and the other as verse—a wide field lies in which it is possible to construct something that would be neither the one nor the other. And free verse will be an experimentation of some kind in this field; and it may be claimed, as I think it is imagined, that such an intermediate form may combine some of the advantages of both systems: it might possess in some measure the freedom of prose and the expectancy of the old verse: but we should be prepared to find that in discarding the distinctions which perfected the old types, it lost their most forcible characteristics.

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A french writer, to whom I shall return, argues thus: The old poetic verse, he says, marches along bi virtue of its common'speech units, the rhythm of which is chosen to enforce or vary the metrical lines. And he contends with Mr. flint that the beauty of the rhythms lies wholly in the speech'rhythms: they are the essence of the thing, and we do not need the metrical units, which mey be regarded, almost historically, as a scaffolding for the building that has been erected, and having now served there purpose, they my be removed and permit the rhythmic building, to stand clear.

This is intelligible enough: I wrote myself (in Mil'ton's Prosody),—

'It miht be possible, as it is certainly conceivable, to base the whole art of versification on speech'rhythm, and differentiate the prosodies secondarily by their various qualities of effect upon the speech. But no one has ever attempted that!

And now, quoting myself, I see that I had no riht to sty that the attempt had never been made, for of course I can' not know, tho I am convinced that the tasklies beyond our power. But it is plein that the establishment of speech' rhythm as the rule of free verse would, if it should arrive at eny rules, be a first step towards such a fundamental

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analysis, and we shall now hav to examin that step as the theorists hav made it

The french critic, M. Dujardin, whom I hav quoted above (Les Premiers Poetes du Vers Libre, in the Mercure de France), has a full knowledge of the sub' ject: he writes with authority and it seems to me with common sense, gret ability and sound logic: I shall take his analysis as a besis, (a) He assumes that one can recognize good prose when one sees it, and that it is pos' sible to write a prose poem, i.e. to write 'poetry' in prose. But that is not free verse, (b) He is also in mi opinion quite riht when he further asserts that the 'verses' of the Bible hav given rise to a unique impression which, having been consciously and unconsciously copied, has created a distinct recognizable form. And this is a hibrid: it is not free verse, (c) He recognizes the habit of introducing ir' regularity into the old metrical forms, i.e. writing the old metres so that they do not scan. This, which is common in France, is the commonest kind of incompetent technique in English poets of whatever stile at the present time. This

The fact that it would be equally true to sey that it is impossible to draw the line between prose and verse (as appears throughout this discussion) does not invalidate M. 'Dujardin' s assumption. No line can be drawn between the animal and vegetable kingdoms, but we do not for that reason deni the typical distinction between a lion and an oak tree.

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again is not free verse, (under this head would fall the Vers Libere of modern Trench, the Prose Cadencee ou Vers Libres of Moliere [Malade Imaginaire], and, I suppose, the blank verse passages of Dickens's prose.) (d) And to these three I must add a fourth, a form of verse which perhaps is not yet recognz'd in french tho it is common with us, viz. irregular accentual verse. This is not free verse in the proper sense of that term, because it really conforms, or should conform, to definit metrical laws, which allow indeed eny irregularity of length in the line but somewhat confine the rhythms to very various but still defnitforms.

M. Dujardin then describes what the elements of the new verse, i.e. rhythm without metre, must logically be. Since the elements of the new verse can no longer be the syllabic feet of the metrical system, they must (he says) be the rhythmic sense units which are in revolt against them: and so (a) A line of free verse is a grammatical unit or unity, made of accentual verbal units combining to a rhythmical import, complete in itself and sufficient in itself; (b) the line may be various in length, and of any length, only not too long; (c) the line is absolutely indifferent to syllabic numeration or construction apart from its own propriety of sense and pleasant movement; (d) and being free

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from all metrical obligations, such as caesura, hietus, &c, these and all other artifices proper to metrical prosodies are forbidden to it

The above statement does not seem to me to be open to objection: it is a competent description of the trend of experiments, justified in their successes and discriminating their inconsistencies and errors. We may provisionally accept it with confidence: but M. Dujardin leaves us after all with no other distinction made between prose and free verse but this, namely, that free verse is made up of short sections or lines which are in themselves accentual and grammatical unities: and it is in this description, which does not fit prose, that we must look to find the distinctive quality of free verse.

The independent formal existence of prose is not denied on any hand. Mr. Flint, with whose opinions I hold much in common, and who appears here to be at one with M. Dujardin, distinguishes 'prose' from 'cedenced prose', and seems to imply that all cedenced prose is free verse. Thus he says 'Cedence should not be printed as prose', and, as I read him, he notes this undefined term 'cedenced' to be the distinction between prose and verse. That, or any other term, would be useful and serve for a name if it were so defined as to distinguish the prose rhythms which without

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damag can he represented in short sections, from those which cannot: and I should no douht agree with Mr. Flint He has not, however, made this distinction clear, and it is the very point at issue, the positiv definition which we are seeking). And if distinction exists it should he easy to de' monstrete it bi quoting) a specimen of good prose and ex' posing) the characteristics; eny passeg of fine prose should serve. I take one from Bacon:

'As if there were sought in knowledge a cowch wher' upon to rest a searching and restlesse spirite; or a tar' rassefor awandring and variable minde, to walke up and downe with a fair prospect; or a Tower of State for a proude minde to raise it selfe upon; or a Fort or com' maunding ground for strife and contention, or a shoppe for profite or sale; and not a rich Storehouse for the glorie of the Creator and the reliefe of mans estate.'

Oragein this:

'We see in Needle works and Embroyderies, it is more pleasing to have a lively work upon a sad and solemn ground, than to have a dark and melancholy work upon a lightsome ground, Judg therefore of the pleasure of the Heart, by the pleasure of the Eye.'

I assert of these passages that they cannot he printed in

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short sections as free verse without damage and absurdity. Let the reader try his hand on them.

And certainly much well written free verse, in which the lines are of very length and rhythm, is not good prose. However irregular the lines be, they are conscious of their length: they pose with a sort of independence and self-sufficiency: and where the verse is most successful its tendencies provoke too much of the expectancy of verse to appear so wholly free from restraint as the best prose can: and it is right enough to call it verse rather than prose. And if it is quite satisfactory—as in short poems it very well may be—it is so by virtue of the poet's sensibility to rhythmical form, and by his mastery of it; and he will so combine his rhythms that they do create expectancy as they proceed: indeed I do not doubt that a free-verse poet would regard the pleasure which accompanies this satisfied expectancy, as a note of his success.

Now in so far as this free verse (or censored prose) actually creates this expectancy, its rhythms can no doubt be analyzed and reduced to rule, what generally satisfies the ear does so by some principle or law; and the simplest, the commonest and most prevailing conditions will soon be recognized; and they would be the simplest elements of any possible reduction of all verse rhythms to one sys

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tern. The writer of free verse cannot escape from this: in' deed his rejection of metre is bes'd on the recognition of rhythms: he cleims for them that they are the fundamental overruling things. He has cast off his visible cheins but has not escep'd into liberty, if he is a lav unto himself, he is so only bi unconscious obligation to a wider lav to which he has appeal'd. But then comes the unavoidable consideration, of what nature are these effects which he is eiming at, and on which he relies? That he can reli on them implies that they are what other ears are preper 'd to accept, and such effects can only be the primary movements of rhythm upon which all verse has always depended, and which, on his own assumption, poets hav elaborated into the perfected metrical forms which he repudiets.

if ever he become conscious of this, then the purity of his art must appear to him as a sort of protestantism, hamper'd bi negativ prescriptions and tabulated prejudices: he will be constantly engeg'd in deliberately avoiding reminiscences and in disguising essential similarities. And a gret deal of free verse has been easily analizd into the disguise of old forms.

It is open to the advocate of free verse to object to all this. He mey repudiate expectancy andsey that it is one of the things that he wishes to be rid of, and that it will not

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be present in free verse. On mi own showing it would be a subtle and hidden quality, but none the less I doubt not of its cause or effect, and I believe that it is the force which will hold his free verse together and distinguish it from prose, and I think that free verse is good and theoretically defensible only in so far as it can create expectancy with' out the old metrical devices, if it feils to effect this, it seems to me but a broken jerky sort of bad prose: and the old fluent prose needs not me nor eny one else to defend it from those who would cut it to pieces and call its fragments verse.

But whether or no a free versifier repudiate expectancy, he must renounce certein other advantages of the metrical system, the value of which is so gret that it is difficult to believe that they can hav been duly appreciated bi the men who would cast them contemptuously awy.

I will describe as briefly as I can a few of the adverse conditions which must result from rejecting) the metrical systems, and for sake of clearness will name four of them thus:

- (1) Loss of carrying power.*
- (2) Self consciousness.*
- (3) Sameness of line structure.*
- (4) indetermination of subsidiary 'accent'.*

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first, loss of carry ing) power. Almost all the power that gret poets like Homer and Dante hav of poetizing what ever they my handle is due to their fix d prosodies, if this should be doubted, suppose the experiment of rewriting their poems so that they did not scan, it would of course be mere destruction, and observe, destruction not only of the gret immortal lines where the magical concurrence of hih diction with metrical form stands out in a clear configuration of beauty that makes them unforgettable and has enshrind them among) the treasures of every cultur d mind, but the mortar also between the stones, which is now hardly distinguishable from them, would perish and rot away, and would no longer serve to hold the fabric together. A single example will be sufficient: Dante, who was careful to open his cantos effectivly, does not scruple to begin the third canto of the Purgatory with apiece of narrativ business that Cary, who had no metric skill, represents in his translation bi this flat and avkward line:

*Them sudden fight had scatter d o'er the plain,
but the Italian is*

Avvegnache la subitanafuga

Dispergesse color per la campagna:

and one miht almost sty that the Commedia does not contein lines of grater dignity. The diction, rhythm and

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sonority are carried b'i the versification without a trace of pomposity or affectation; and depriv'd of that resource, free verse must be full of disconsolate patches, for it has no corresponding machinery to carry the subordinated matter.

Second, self-consciousness. It seems very clear to me that free verse as defin'd cannot be written without the appearance of self-consciousness. The conditions are these: Each line or phrase has (ex hypothesi) to show convincing propriety of diction and rhythm, together with other proprieties of relative length, sonority and poetic value. Now this is frankly impossible; what may conceivably be done in Gaelic, Hindustani or the languages of the Pacific islanders, I do not know; but English was not made for it and cannot do it. The writer of free verse confronted b'i a thousand obstacles will, in a poem of any length, whenever his matter lacks poetic content, be at his wit's end to devise something passable; and his readers or hearers, if they be intelligent, will observe him with amusement, and he himself, being presumably intelligent, will be uncomfortably aware of the situation; for while pretending honest aesthetic rightness he will know that he is only providing ingenious makeshifts which he would have been glad to avoid.

The happy and not too rare gift of believing that whatever you choose to say must be worth saying, can indeed save

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a man from sely consciousness, and set his work beneath criticism.

Now this situation is created bi free verse; the old metrical system was desind to obviate it, for therein the poet did not choose his form to suit every special turn and item of his matter, but adapted his matter to the exigencies of a prescrib'd form; and in doing this he found a further reward, because the changes of his matter provoked andjusi'tifi'd all the varieties of rhythm that his metre allow'd, so that their desirable irregularities came spontaneously, and his metrical form, harmonizing whatever he had to deal with, offer'd him endless opportunities for unexpected beauties. The metre was like a rich state uniform, robed in which eny man will feel equally at ease whether walking in the gaze of a vulgar crowd, or sustaining the delicet dignity of a court ceremony.

Third,same'ness of grammaticall line.. The identification of the line unit with the grammatical unit must limit the varieties of line structure. This feature of the free verse is not unlike the common'sense attempt of meny modern song 'writers to identifi their musical phrase with the speech'rhythm of the words. Ihav made no examination of the practice of writers in this respect, and shall only be theorizing) in the following remarks.

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The grammatical forms of sentences in English are few, and must repeat themselves agein and agein; and each form has its proper and natural inflection of voice which, how ever overbid, will impose its typical intonation on the sen' tence. Now if the grammatical forms are made coincident with the lines of the verse, they must impose the recur' rence of their similar intonations upon the lines.

It would be easy to quote some passeg of free verse which exhibited this kind of monotony, but it would be un' feir because it coud be match'd bi similar examples from metrical poems, indeed the best metrical poetry respects the grammar so strictly that much of it complies fully with M. Dujardins rule, and miht be quoted as typical free verse, were it not for the negativ rule that forbids its metre. Moreover monotony of this kind is often agreeable in itself, and sought for its special effect. None the less, one of the difficulties in writing good verse of eny kind is to escape from the tyranny of these recurrent speech'forms, and the restriction imposed bi the rules of free verse must meke that difficulty immeasurably grater.

Since the eim and boast of free verse is that it will attain spontaneity and variety, I wonder at miself finding it in danger of self'consciousness and monotony of form.

fourth, indeterminetion of subsidiary accent. Metrical

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*verse has the power of determining and releting the subordi
net or ambiguous accentuations in a rhythmical phrase;
and the essential value of this resource seems to hav been
disregard ed bi the advocates of free verse.*

*A poem in metre has a predetermin'd organic normal
scheme for its lines, and whatever their varieties of rhythm
no line can be constructed without reference to its form:
hence the same syllabic rhythms acquire different values
according) to their place in the line. The indefinable delicacy
of this power over the hidden possibilities of speech is what
most invites and rewards the artist in his technique, as the
ignorance, neglect or abuse of it mekes the chief badness of
bad work, its subtleties mock illustration, but demonstre
tion can be simple and even commonplace. The second book
of paradise Lost opens thus:*

*High on a Throne of Royal state, which far
Outshon the wealth of ormus and of Ind.*

*These are two lines of blank verse, but they can be written
as two lines of free verse thus:*

*High on a Throne of Royal State,
V/hich far outshon the wealth of ormus and of ind.*

*Now in writing) and reading them thus, the value of the word
far is lost: it is seen that the word cannot in itself deter*

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minfor itself eny special value; in the free verse it is flat and dull, and one does not know what to do with it, for if it be unaccented it is useless, and if accented it is foolish, Indeed, no accentuation can restore to it what it has lost.

This one example is enough to show what is intended in this section, but another will lead further, and the pas' sag which I quoted in mi Milton's Prosody, to exhibit how he broke up his lines, will serve well: in Paradise Lost, iii,37 seq.:

*Then feed on thoughts, that voluntarie move
Harmonious numbers; as the wakeful Bird
Sings darkling, and in shadiest Covert hid
Tunes her nocturnal Note. Thus with the Year
Seasons return, but not to me returns
Day, or the sweet approach of Ev'n or Morn.*

These lines are gretly admired; a critic would hardly accuse them of prosaic or dull diction. But now set them out as free verse:

*Then feed on thoughts,
That voluntarie move harmonious numbers;
As the wakeful Bird sings darkling,
And in shadiest Covert hid
tunes her nocturnal Note.*

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*Thus with the Year seasons return,
But not to me returns Day,
Or the sweet approach of Ev'n or Morn.*

The very diction of the verses has suffer'd terribly. I doubt if I should have seen any merit in them had I read them thus in the free verse of a contemporary poet, if this be so it follows that diction in free verse will need be far more exacting than the diction of metrical verse, it must be more beautiful in itself because it has relinquish'd the technique of one of the main sources of its beauty.

A free versifier may welcome this situation, and say that his poetry will be the better for excluding phrases that are in themselves so little beautiful that they must borrow adventitious beauty from mechanical devices. Well and good — if he can justify himself: but language is refractory, and all technique in Art consists in devices for the mastering of obstinate material, if free verse must of its nature be more beautiful than metrical verse, let us rejoice and wait patiently, it is a case of solvitur ambulando, perhaps one should sty volando or volitando.

I have myself made so many experiments that I cannot be suspected of wishing to discourage others. No art can flourish that is not alive and growing, and it can only grow by invention of new methods or by discovery of new

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material In the art of English verse mi own work has led me to think that there is a wide field for exploration in the metrical prosody, and that in carrying on Milton 's inventions in the syllabic verse there is better hope of successful progress than in the technique of free verse' as I understand it

III

POETIC DICTION IN ENGLISH

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POETIC DICTION IN ENGLISH

POETIC Diction is a wide subject, and this paper will deal with only one little corner of it; it will examin the dislike which poets of to'day exhibit towards the tradi tional forms: and since even this, to be thorough, would involve a completer description of the traditional forms than a short discourse allows of, we must be contented to outline the situation with a few typical illustrations.

*The revolt ageinst the old diction is a reaction which in its general attitude is rational: and it is in line with the re action of 'The Lake School' of Poetry, familiar to all stu dents in Wordsworth's statement, and Coleridge's criti cism and correction of that statement in his *Biographia Literaria*'. Both movements alike protest ageinst all ar' cheisms of vocabulary and grammar and what are call'd literary forms, and plead for the simple terms and direct forms of common speech.*

*As mi method is to be bi illustration, I will begin with an extreme example, Milton's *Lycidas*, a poem which tho' Dr. Johnsons common'sense condemn d it without*

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reserve, has in spite of the extravagance of its conventions grown in favour, and firmly holds its cheim to be one of the most beautiful of the gret masterpieces of English verse.

Only a few days ago I received a new German transle' tion of it, in the preface whereto it is stated to be 'Ein Gip' fel, vielleicht der Gipfel aller schäferlichen, aller Renais' sancelyrik, unerreicht die Schönheit u. s. w!

The undisgised conventionality of Lycidas is sufficiently obvious in its properties. Muses, Eavns, Satyrs and Nymphs, with Druids and River gods associate with St. peter and the pope, and in their company a new River' god, Camus, invented on a bogus etymology: but the remoteness from common'sense which offended Dr. Johnson can be fully exposed bi quoting a single line: the poet be weiling) the death of a colleg friend bi shipwreck in the Irish channel, concludes the section of his lament over the unburiedbody in these words:

And O ye dolphins, waft the hapless youth!
we hav to face the fact that this strange and meaning less invocation does not sound frigid or foolish in the poem. Rather it is evident that it was the very strength of the poet's feeling) that has forced the transmutation of his memories and of the practical aspects of life into a dreamy passionet flux, where all is so hihtend and inspir'd that we do not

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wonder to find embedded therein the clear prophecy of a conspicuous historical event: tho' the whole of literature can scarcely show eny comparable example.

This is poetic magic. Certainly it was not to common sense that Milton turn dfor consolation; and a work of sheer beauty was the only worthy offering that Poetry could make.

After reading Lycidas let us see how it is with Shelley's Adonais. Tho' as a whole this poem cannot compete with Milton, yet it contains lines and passages of unsurpassable beauty, both of diction and verse, and it is worthy to be compar'd; and since {especially towards the end} it is in closer contact with our natural expression of feeling it appeals more strongly to some tastes. Well, the properties are as literary as in Milton. We have the Muses and Urania: Milton's 'where were ye Nymphs when the remorseless deep?' becomes 'where wert thou mighty Mother, when he lay?' and in company with Urania we have Adam and Cain and Apollo and the Wandering Jew and living persons, all magisterially blended by Shelley's usual phantasmagoria. And in one respect he is even more conventional or pedantic than Milton, because he borrows more directly from his Greek models, and with marvellous Englishity makes Hellenic beauties his own. Moreover he works Bion's machinery: Aphrodite becomes Adonis becomes

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Urania bewailing Keats—the difference in the circumstances needing all the resources of "his free symbolism to adapt it. "We must not, however, be led away from the question of mere diction, and I mention d this point merely to show that Shelley's diction is more conventional than Milton's and sometimes when it least appears to be so, because many of its beauties are more directly borrow'd. He has, indeed, no one line to match Milton's call to the dolphins, but many which common'sense would rate as equally extravagant

Thirdly, let us look at Arnold's Thyrsis, a Victorian poem in direct line with Lycidas and Adonais, consciously affiliated with them and plainly inspp'd by Milton. I remember many years ago how Ingram Bywater, when we were both young, contended against me that Thyrsis was as good a poem as Lycidas: I do not know how far he was in earnest.

Now in Arnold's poem he and his friend are Corydon and Thyrsis, they have their shepherd's pipes, and the Hellenic properties are practically the same as Milton's and Shelley's; but they are frankly set in a modern English landscape and introduced naturally as actual figures of the mental world wherein the two friends had liv'd and loved. Their mutual sympathy in this symbolism makes it possible almost to confound Enna with Cumnor, and that is

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skilfully accomplish'd, but amid the stron, deteils of nativ colour and homely affections we hav an Ionian folk-tale of obscure antiquity, the relevancy of which is hardly clear d up bi a lon note. since there is no truce of christian symbolism in the poem, the Properties are simpler than Miltons or Shelley's, and the Diction my be stiled Wordsworthian; it would hardly hav offended Dr. Johnson: it is pleinely not intended to be in what Arnold has cavll'd 'the grand stile, and he was never in danger of attemptin shelley's heavenwavrd flihts, which he thought ineffectual Thus we my sty that, compar'd with Lycidas and Adonais, Arnold's Thyrsis is in simplifi'd diction.

what then is the effect of such a diction? In judging this we must remember that Arnold is not Milton, and I am probably myself too much bias'd in favour of the grater poet: but if a 'rational' diction is eny decided poetic advan'tag, then that advantag should appear, whereas the im'pression that Thyrsis mokes on me when I compare it with Lycidas is that it lacks in passion, as if it were a handlin of emotions rather than the compellin utterance of them, and so far as that must hav the effect of insincerity it is the last thin that we should expect from the exclusion of conventions. it does not carry the same conviction of distress that Lycidas does; neither the friendship nor the

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sorrow seems so profound, and the whole poem, tho' it is agreeable readin, leaves one cold at the end. This miht in grat part be accounted for bi its fanciful argument and bi the poet's mentality, nor can I pretend to decide how much is due to the diction: the example must remein a negativ one; but in illustration, I will quote a passag from Thyr-sis whare Arnold follows Milton in moralizin on the 'vanity' of the sincerest human effort in the search for ideal Truth; he has

*This does not come with houses or with gold,
With place, with honour, and a flattering crew;
'Tis not in the world's market bought and sold!
But the smooth-slipping weeks
Drop by, and leave its seeker still untired;
Out of the heed of mortals he is gone,
He wends unfollow'd, he must house alone;
Yet on he fares, by his own heart inspired.*

Milton has

*Fame is the spur that the clear spirit doth raise
(That last infirmity of Noble mind)
To scorn delights, and live laborious dayes;
But the fair Guerdon when we hope to find,
And think to burst out into sudden blaze,
Comes the blind Fury with th' abhorred shears,*

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*And slits the thinspun life, 'But not the praise,
Phoebus replied, and touch'd my trembling ears
and so on, and this in spite of old Phoebus and the bad
grammatical inversion in the first fyne.*

It is difficult to dissociate the quality of Diction from two other matters, namely properties and Keepin. Properties is a term borrowed from the stage. The mixture of Greek and christian types in Lycidas and Adonais is a good example of Properties. The term Keepin is taken from peintin and has no convenient synonym, but it my be expleindas the harmonizin of the artistic medium, and since Diction is the chief means in the harmonizin of properties, it would seem that eny restriction or limitation of the Diction must tend to limit the Properties, since without artistic keepin their absurdities would be exposed.

Dr. Johnsons common-sense miht contend that all Properties were absurd if their absurdity were merely diss gsed bi Keepin. But in aesthetic no Property is absurd if it is in Keepin. This does not decide what Properties should be used. Different Properties are indispensable for different imaginativ effects. Good Keepin is a fast essential in all good writin, and especially in poetry. Perhaps it is evident here that the poorer the Properties are, the less call will they make on diction for their keepin, altho the simplest

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Properties are on their own plane no less exigent: and agein the tyher the poet's command of diction, the wider my he the feld of his Properties. Also, and this is a very practical point, if a writer with no command of imaginativ diction should use such Properties as are difficult of harmonization, he will discredit both the Properties and the Diction.

This is as it should be. in all fields of Art the imitators are far more numerous than the artists, and they will copy the externals, in poetry the Versification and the Diction, which in their hands become futile. Criticism does not assist art bi exposin such incompetencies: nor can it hepreised for philanthropic intention, because dahhlin in the arts is one of the most harmless pleasures of life: thare my he more to be said for it than for dahhlin in criticism as I am doin here.

We my now fairly put the followin question: is this protest ageinst poetic diction intended to confine Properties to actualities? No poet would consent to that. is it then merely a protest ageinst archaic and literary forms of speech? Supposin this to be intended, we my enquire how far it can, on eny poetic plane, be practically enforced. We cannot hope to get very far through with this business, hut we can insert the thin end of the wedge.

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The adverb hither has gon almost entirely out of use in common speech, and except in the idiom 'hither and thither' is rarely found in modern prose. Yet tho' obsolescent it is without obscurity and is a pretty word. No purist in diction coud object to it

And if hither be admitted, what of wherein, where-to, whereby, &c. To forbid them and insist on the alternatives in which, to which, by which, &c., would discredit my honest grammarian; his hope would be that familiarity with the better and more convenient forms in poetry miht lead to their more frequent use in prose, and that they miht thus, through the journals and current literature, win restoration into our common speech.

But if it should happen that such simple obsolescent forms actually became quite common agein, it is certein that they would lose some of their poetic and literary value, and a writer who had meinteind his elevation partly on such cheap stilts would miss them and unconsciously feel about for somethin to take their place. And their natural substitutes would be other words which had the same obsolescent quality as his old friends used to hav before they had been too familiaiz'd. One can imagin that this process of restorin good obsolescent forms miht thus go on ad infinitum. On the other hand, as

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things are now, the self-denial of our common speech may be regarded as the generous and jealous guardian of our literary style.

Since poetic language is essentially a rarity of expression of one sort or another, it is unreasonable to forbid apt and desirable grammatical forms merely because they are not read in the newspapers or heard at the dinner-table. And if once such unusual forms are admitted they will colour the keeping of the diction and invite a kindred vocabulary. It has lately become a fashion to use dialectal words in poetry. Such words are generally free from the stain of conventionality and since they are often better English words than their familiar synonyms, the only objection against them is that they are unknown or obscure, and have the same sort of effect as some of Burns' Scottish words have to English ears—they need translation. But if, for instance, such good old English words as inwit and wanhope should be rehabilitated (and they have been pushed up their heads for thirty years), we should gain a great deal; for we should not only win back towards a closer relationship with our older literature, but these words would soon differentiate themselves from their Latin synonyms conscience and despair, just as we have differentiated fatherly and paternal; and we should thus add to that

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subtlety in the expression of ideas which bi like means has become a peculiar excellence of our tongue.

It m\$it be urged that with Milton and Shelley, who were educated bi Hellenic models and had come bi reading and meditation to hav panoramic views of History and Truth, it was natural to write at that hiht—their poetic diction my be the spontaneous utterance of their subconscious mind—but that it is nevertheless regrettable becavse common folk whom they miht otherwise deliht and instruct cannot understand it. This is a wron notion, it was not Dr. Johnsons ignorance or deficient education that made him dislike Lycidas. It was his unpoetic mind that was at fa/It, and his taste in Music or peintin would probably hav been at the same level. Moreover children do not resent what they cannot understand in poetry, and they generally hav a keener sense for beauty than Dr. Johnson had—indeed, if he would hav become agein as a little child, he miht hav lik'd Lycidas very well. Anatole France has put this matter so admirably that I will end mi paper bi transcribin the words in which he tells his own experience.

Il y avait dans ce recit un grand nombre de termes que j'entendais pour la premiere fois et dont je ne savais pas la signification; mais l'ensemble men sembla si triste etsi

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*beau que je ressentis, à l'entendre, un frisson inconnu;
le charme de la mélancolie me fait revivre par une trentaine de vers dont j'aurais été incapable d'expliquer le sens littéral. C'est que, d moins d'être vieux, on n'a pas besoin de beaucoup comprendre pour beaucoup sentir. Des choses obscures peuvent être des choses touchantes, et il est bien vrai que le vague plaît aux jeunes âmes.'*

